

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

7th March 2018
Penallta House (Ebbw Room)

PRESENT

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Cllr. Andrew Whitcombe	CCBC (Armed Forces Champion)
Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Bryan Tansley	SSAFA (Gwent Area)
Ken Terry	Royal British Legion
Julianne Newsham	Regular Forces Employment Association
Axel Rees	Hire a Hero
Peter Bevan	Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)
David Lancaster	Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)
Kirsty Gronow	Poppy Factory
Natalie McCombe	Poppy Factory
Andy Jones	SToMP
Abi Wrigley	Army Families Federation
Darren Carless	CCBC (Community Safety)
Sian Weeks	United Welsh
Darren White	Action On Hearing Loss

APOLOGIES

Keith Sutcliffe	SSAFA
Anthony Metcalfe	Royal British Legion
Peter Evans	Royal British Legion
Tom Hall	Blesma
Shelley Elgin	Help For Heroes
Captain Huw Williams	203 (Welsh) Field Hospital

KP welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for brief introductions.

1.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

2.0 UPDATES OF ACTIONS

- No actions required from previous meeting

3.0 INTRODUCTION – CLLR ANDREW WHITCOMBE (Caerphilly Armed Forces Champion)

Cllr Whitcombe introduced himself to the Forum as the new Armed Forces Champion for Caerphilly County Borough Council. Cllr Whitcombe has strong links to the military as his father had served and another family member. He looks forward to representing the Armed Forces Community within the borough.

4.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

LR advised the forum of the following:

- Housing –Although Caerphilly has a robust policy in relation to housing there is scope to model Torfaen County Borough Councils current policy. Their housing department backdate the date of being on the housing register to the day the joined the Armed Forces. This would apply to service leavers only. She has attended the Gwent Homelessness stakeholder event to discuss the homeless veterans in the area. There are currently no Wales homes for veterans in the Gwent Region. She is looking into transit accommodation to alleviate the situation. Veterans Gateway will be employing a housing officer to navigate the complexities of housing. They have also been given a copy of Caerphilly housing policy to help them understand the priorities.
- Veteran Prison Leavers – After visiting HMP Prescoed and HMP Usk it was highlighted that there may be an issue accessing housing on release and possible lack of current information amongst the Prison Officers who are veteran liaisons within the Prison. An information pack has been sent with all local third sector information and stressed they should liaise with STOMP for the co-ordination of activities.
- Criminal Justice System – The AFLO attended the consultation event for the possible diversion programme for veterans. The next stage is in progress and will update any developments.
- Education – There is new Project Officer for WLGA. Millie Taylor has organised a conference on 12th June. The Forum would like the invite to be re-sent
- Survey – A survey has been conducted within the authority. So far out of 435 replies it has been identified that there is 27 who have previously served and 85 who has a direct family member that have served.
- Gwent Armed Forces Community now have Facebook and Twitter accounts
- Caerphilly will shortly be hosting a Mayors Cadet
- A competition will be run for all local schools in celebration of RAF100
- Caerphilly Armed Forces Day Celebrations will be held in Bargoed 23rd June 18
- A Marquee has been secured for the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum Members for the two days of the Caerphilly Big Cheese event

Action: LR to re-send invite to the Education Conference

5.0 UPDATE FROM CROSS PARTY GROUP MEETING

LR advised the forum of the following:

- The meeting was held 12th Feb in the Welsh Assembly
- Included a discussion around an appointment of an Armed Forces Commissioner
- Voiced concern over the current justice policy
- A presentation by Dr Neil Kitchner of the new 3MDR trial
- Inquiry into WG funding to embed the peer mentoring service
- Presentation on Project360 (age 65 and over)
- Discussion over tick box for the Electoral Register as a way of identifying the Veterans
- Update from Army Families Federation – flagging the need for a Service Pupil Premium
- RBL updated the group that their external grants funding is open to applications from 23rd February 2018

6.0 FEEDBACK FROM GWENT ARMED FORCES FORUM

LR reported that the meeting on 7th Feb was cancelled and no further meeting has been set.

Action – Confirm date of next meeting

7.0 UPDATE FROM WELSH GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES TEAM

KP advised the forum the following:

- E – Learning Package – Commissioned by the WLGA from Covenant Fund. Delayed until April 18

- Commissioned Media company to video best practice which should link into the e-learning package – still awaiting date of release
- Bidding for funds to create a toolkit designed to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant to front-line local authority staff
- Armed Forces Conference – next conference 17th October to be held in Cardiff – venue TBC
- Creation of an All Wales Network sitting twice a year with representation of all 22 Local Authorities – next meeting April/May

8.0 PRESENTATION FROM DARREN CARLESS (CCBC – Community Safety)

Darren Carless gave a brief presentation outlining Prevent

- Introduction to the Prevent duty, and explains how it aims to safeguard vulnerable people from being radicalised to supporting terrorism or becoming terrorists themselves.
- In practice it aims for police and other organisations to build relations across the UK and requires faith leaders, teachers, doctors and others to refer any suspicions about people to a local Prevent body. An assessment is then made about whether further action is needed.
- Social services departments have become increasingly involved in identifying Prevent cases because of their duty to counter radicalisation

Action: ABF has asked for a copy of the presentation for her network

9.0 PRESENTATION FROM DARREN WHITE ACTION ON HEARING LOSS

- Darren White gave a presentation outlining his project for Action on Hearing Loss
- The Aged Veterans project offers information and support to older veterans with hearing loss or tinnitus, and their families and carers, across England and Wales.
- The project focuses on supporting veterans born before 1 January 1950, but they will assist all veterans who contact us.
- The aim is to help older veterans with hearing difficulties access local support services and, as a result, feel better able to connect with their families, friends and communities
- They offer
 - basic hearing screenings
 - information about assistive equipment
 - support to help you access NHS services
 - information on benefits
 - information about local community groups
- They also provide support to the families and carers of older veterans with hearing loss or tinnitus, and work with community groups to enable them to be more inclusive of veterans with hearing loss.

10.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

10.1 Hire a Hero

- Continuing to attend Employment Fairs to target Armed Forces who are transitioning back to Wales
- Targeting Corporate Companies who have signed the covenant and who may have Armed Forces Champions within the business
- New Fundraising Manager employed
- Their current vacancies are on their website and on CTP
- Continue to support Veterans in local prisons

10.2 SSAFA

- BT informed the forum that they are very busy since the start of the new year – receiving more calls from ex. Welsh Guards and there seems to be no apparent reason for this.
- There is The general trend is that they are seeing clients get younger along with an increase in cases from the National Service demographic
- The growth area is still people applying for funeral costs and they work close with CAB in trying to resolve their debts.

- There is an increase in the prison population at Usk, they state when they started there were 27 veterans which has increased to 32 and they make up over 10% of prisoners
- Raised over £100,000 in Gwent which seems to be down on previous years – cases are becoming more complex and demanding
- They attended to over 300 cases in the Greater Gwent area of which over 100 were from the Caerphilly borough.
- Preparation underway for the new Data Protection Guidelines

10.3 Regular Forces Employment Association

- Support Service Leavers from two years before leaving the armed forces through the Career Transition Partnership.
- Julianne covers Pan Wales
- Supports 2 years Post discharge
- A record of 92% of finding employment
- Advertise vacancies on Right Job/CTP – 134 live jobs for South Wales at present
- Work with employers from SME's to larger organisations such as British Gas and Babcock
- Requires proof of service

10.4 Royal British Legion

- 'Count me in' Campaign continues to be successful – they are still seeking support
- GP90 event – 1000 branches have signed up to send one standard bearer and one wreath layer (Caerphilly Branch has signed)
- Informed forum of a Veterans Parade in Vale of Glamorgan 9th June
- RBL Caerphilly would like to join the Forum at Caerphilly Big Cheese if they do not have a separate stand

10.5 Army Families Federation

- Have started a monthly theme – last one spousal employment
- Continue to advocate in relation to healthcare and dental
- Continue to push for the SPP to be available in Wales. Education Support Fund coming to and end
- Housing is always an issue
- They are targeting families to support with transition whilst the member is still serving whilst family move in preparation

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10.7 Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)

- They provide a focal point for former members to meet regularly
- Currently have about 40 members (Oldest member 87yrs and youngest member 32).
- Hold 2 or 3 fundraising events every year
- This year members will be visiting Ypres, Belgium to commemorate the end of WW1

10.8 SToMP

- AJ informed the forum that this is a 2 year project
- Developed to try to ensure veterans who enter the criminal justice system are consistently identified early on and can be guided towards those support services that help the ex-service community. The ultimate goal is to implement an inclusive, multi-agency approach to supporting ex-Armed Service Personnel (ex-ASPs) from arrest right through to their exit from the criminal justice system.
- There are currently 2 Liaison Officers in Wales
- Liaise with Probation Officers and Veteran Care team
- Organise coffee mornings, activities and hubs
- Team of the Year Award

- 5% of the current prison population are veterans, 12 % are DV and SO. 22% of HMP Usk are veterans
- Also visited Colchester to link in with prisoners who will settle back in Wales

10.9 The Poppy Factory

- Support ex-service men and women with health challenges into fulfilling careers
- Work with businesses across the country to provide bespoke opportunities and ongoing employment support for hundreds of disabled veterans of all ages and from all Services, helping to restore their financial independence through sustainable and rewarding work
- They look at Temporary work whilst looking for a career
- State they have capacity for more referrals and currently have none on their books for Caerphilly.
- Attend a variety of meeting including clinical and Armed Forces Forums throughout South Wales

10.10 United Welsh

- Stated this was the first they had attended of late and were heartened at the current support available for the Armed Forces Community
- She would like to meet with the AFLO to discuss working closer

10.11 Help For Heroes (emailed update)

- Continue with Monthly activities at Caerphilly Miners and Sports sessions at Newport Sports Village
- There is both Welfare and Clinical support available for the Wounded, injured or sick

10.12 BLESMA (THE LIMBLESS VETERANS) OVERVIEW

- A new Blesma (The Limbless Veterans Charity) Support Officer, and representative has been appointed for Wales. Tom Hall who is based from Abercraf in the Swansea Valley. Tom served in the army for 29 years, leaving service in October 2017 to join Blesma. He covers the whole of Wales and Herefordshire.
- Blesma helps all serving and ex-Service men and women who have lost limbs, or lost the use of limbs or eyes, to rebuild their lives by providing rehabilitation activities and welfare support. Blesma programmes allow Members and their families to face the challenges ahead with renewed confidence and self-belief. Since 1932, Blesma has been the only National Service charity that supports limbless veterans for the duration of their lives. Members range from the youngest amputee veterans to those who fought in WWII. Blesma also supports members' widows for life, once members have passed on.
- As well as Tom Hall (the Support Officer), Blesma are also about to recruit a Blesma Outreach Officer to work with Tom promoting peer to peer member support, offering support to Blesma members and increasing the range of Blesma work across Wales and West.

11.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

KP advised that as CCBC will not be hosting South Wales Armed Forces Day in 2018 due to the National Day being in North Wales. However, we will be supporting a CAFF stand at the Big Cheese Festival on the last weekend in July. Forum members are encouraged to register their attendance to the AFLO.

KP advised that a member of the CCBC Comms team will be running the London Marathon 2018 on behalf of the Royal British Legion. Forum members were asked to distribute the link to their networks.

Action: LR to circulate sponsorship link

11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: 10 am Thursday 14th June 2018, Ty Penalta.